



# Message **Transcript** Striking Back

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Lord Jesus, we just thank you so much for who you are, for all you're doing in our church, for all you're doing in our lives individually. Lord, we pray this morning that you would have your way with us, that, Lord, you would speak in such a way that would change who we are, that we'd be more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and Lord, that through your living and active word, you would speak directly to us, that we'd understand who we are in you, that we would understand how we are called to respond.

Lord, we just pray now as a body that as we hear you're living an active word this morning, that we're ready to hear you. And for those who are gathered, who are ready to hear his word and place their faith and trust in Jesus, and take the steps that he shows you to take, will you very loudly agree with me this morning by saying the word, amen. Amen.

When Mike Tyson was going to fight one of his fights back in the day when he was the heavyweight champion of the world, and they were telling him about his competitor and who he was going to be fighting and how he was going to handle that, here's what he said, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face."

What he was trying to say was they can have all the plans in the world, but things fall apart as soon as things go wrong. And the reality is in every aspect of life, we tend to plan what we think is going to happen and then the plan doesn't always work out. And especially when this comes spiritually, we can hear a message from the book of Jude or messages from the book of Jude about false teachers and apostates and

false prophets and what that looks like. And we can say, "Hey, I'm ready for that. I know what to do." Until one of those people being swayed by that is your daughter or it's your son, or it's your mom or it's your dad, or it's your friend at work.

All of a sudden, it's like, "Now, what do I do now? How do I handle that?" Because where they're going and what they're listening to, and what they're hearing is going to take them off a cliff. How am I called to respond? How am I called to fight back? And that's what Jude's going to tell us today. How it is that we can strike back and do it the way that God wants us to do? Because if you walk with Christ long enough, you will see people that are not walking out the gospel or being swayed by false teaching. And then how is it that we're called to respond to people like that?

So I'm going to invite you to open up your Bible to the Book of Jude. It's the 65th book in your Bible. The very second to last right before the Book of Revelation. Only one chapter long, 25 verses, and yet in these, it packs such a punch. Jude 17 through 23. As a matter of fact, the longer I'm teaching this book, I think we can entitle this series like Jude is a dude because, I mean, it's so powerful in these short verses, everything that he's telling us, and today is no different.

So let me read the words. If you don't have a copy of God's word, there's one under every other seat. Please take it as our gift to you. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoke open beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time, there will be mockers following after their own ungodly lusts."

These are the ones who cause division, worldly-minded, devoid of the spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are doubting, save others, snatching them out of the fire, and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

And here is Judah's writing. He's telling us how we're to respond and how we're to strike back when we are able to expose the enemy's lives through false teachers, when we're able to realize that we're part of God's team and that God is telling us something entirely different. What does it look like for us as believers to strike back? He really tells us three different ways we can do that and he tells us that in these last days to remember, number one, to trust God's word. In these last days, remember to trust God's word.

Now, notice how he starts out in verse 17. He's going to tell us the same thing in verse 20, "But you, beloved". It's the second and third time he's going to tell us that, because I believe in Jude verse three, he says beloved. We talked about this. But here's what he's trying to say, that you are the beloved of God. If you have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ by faith, and you believe that he is the God of the universe who shed his blood and died on a cross for you and rose from the dead, you are his beloved.

He loves you with an unconditional love. His thoughts for you outnumber the

grains of sand. He can't stop thinking about you and all of his love that he wants to lavish on you. What Jude is trying to tell us before he tells us anything, again, you have to know your identity because for so many of us, even in church, here's what we'll say. Yeah, I know God loves me. That's his job, but it's more than just a cognitive awareness of God loving you.

It's an ownership in your heart that you know that you believe and that you own that the father of the universe loves you through his son, Jesus Christ. And why is this so important? Because there are so many people as believers who know that Jesus died for them and rose from the dead that still struggle with doubt, and shame, and guilt and all these different things. And they'll say things like this, "I got guilt. I got doubt. Yeah, I know God loves me, but I got this and I got... I know God loves me, but..."

No, do you know God loves you? Because when you know God loves you, it changes everything about all the things that he's trying to work out. If you've trusted in Jesus, he loves you with an unconditional love. That means he can't love you any more than he already does. It means it's not based upon your performance or your behavior. He loves you. He said, "Pastor Jeff, I've been in church a long time. I know that. I know you might know it theologically. I know you might believe it. Do you own it?"

I mean, do you walk around during the day thinking this? God is so proud of who I am. God loves me with an unconditional love. God cares for me. God has my best interests. God knows all my shortcomings and still loves me. Do you own that? That's what Jude is saying. Hey, before you strike back, you better understand your identity

and who you are.

Then he says this to trust God's word. Notice what he says, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." He's going to give a specific example. But what were the words spoken up by the apostles? Well, the entire New Testament, all 27 books that we have were words that the apostles and the prophets spoke that made up our New Testament.

But really what he's trying to say is remember all of God's word. In two weeks, I'm going to start a series asking the question, can we trust this book? Because you hear me talk about the authority and an errancy of God's word. You need to believe that for yourself. You need to see what God says about his word. You need to see what the word says about the word. You need to see what history says about the word.

You need to make some decisions as to whether you're going to believe this, because if you believe this, then this book becomes authoritative over your life. And here's what Jude is saying, "Remember what the apostles said, because what they said is authoritative in your life." Now specifically, what did they say? Here's what they said, "They were saying to you in this last time or in the last time, there will be mockers following their own ungodly lust. These are the ones who cause division, worldly-minded, and devoid of the spirit."

In the last time. Well, when's the last time? Well, guess what? You're living in it.

You live in the last time. From the time Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven until he gets back, that's the end times. You are living in the end times. And in the end times he's like, "Remember, what the apostles and prophets spoke about that there are going to arise false teachers?" Which means this. Don't be surprised in your generation when false teachers rise up.

If you lived 30 years after Jesus rose from the dead, you would have known false teachers. If you lived 300 years after Jesus rose from the dead, you would know false teachers. If you lived a thousand years after Jesus rose from your dead, you would know false teachers. And in 2020, you live in a generation where there's false teachers. In other words, trust God's word that false teachers are going to exist. So when you see them, it should not alarm you or you shouldn't be surprised. You should know, "Of course there's false teachers." There's always been false teachers in every single generation.

We've been spelling out what they look like. We exposed them last week. He's going to give us a few more details about them. He says, "They will be mockers following after their own lust." Now think about this, he says, "Don't be surprised." I'm going to give you some verses why you shouldn't be surprised. These are just some verses why you shouldn't be surprised. You can write these down.

In Acts 20:28 to 30, here's what he says. "Paul is gathered with the Ephesian elders. He's gathered with this church that he loves. He's gathered with all their elders. It's going to be the last time he sees them." And here's what he says, Acts 20:28 and following, "Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy

Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood."

Now, why would he say that? Verse 29 tells us. "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves, men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them." He tells this church in Ephesus, a church that he loves, a church that he knows with elders that he cares about. "Hey, be on guard. Don't be alarmed. Don't be surprised. False teachers are going to rise up. Now, where are they going to rise up from?" Within your own midst. And they're going to teach that, which is kind contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was true in the first century church in Ephesus. It's true today. Even when he wrote Timothy who was pastoring that church in the book of 1 Timothy 4:1 through 5. I'll read a couple of the verses. Here's what he says. 1 Timothy 4:1. "But the spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron."

When you're not hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you're hearing somebody tell you something other than what the word of God teaches, that is a doctrine or a teaching of demons. That's where it's coming from. It's satanical inspired doctrine when you hear anything that goes against the word of God, which is why I've told you on many occasions, when you read God's word, if what you read in the word



is different than what you hear me preach, it is not offensive for me, for you to say, "This is what the Bible says. I'm holding onto this. What Pastor Jeff says doesn't mean anything. I have no authority. What the word of God says has all authority."

We're called to be like the Bereans and test this out. Did God really say that? Is that really in the book? I'm doing my best to present what I believe the word of God says, so hopefully we're in line. But when it's not for you to say, "I believe the word of God over Jeff is a righteous thing to do." Because that's what Paul was telling Timothy. "There's going to be people that rise up in your congregation, Timothy."

They're going to have doctrines of demons. They're going to have teachings of evil, deceitful spirits. In 2 Timothy 3, as he writes a second letter to his protegee, Timothy, think about these words. This was true in the first century. It certainly true in 2020. He says, "But realize this, Timothy, that in the last days, difficult times will come. Why? For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of the good, treacherous, reckless, conceited."

How about this one? Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And then in verse 5, it really sums up the whole thing. Having a form of godliness although they have denied its power. What do false teachers have? Well, they have a form of religion. They have a form of an idea, but they deny the power of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was writing to Timothy saying, "That's what's going to happen in your generation. It's been true of every generation since."

When I read these words, I'm like for the last 30 years, I'm like, "That's the world we live in. That's who we are." But even John, not only Paul, but John writes this. Luke has written this. Paul has written this. John has written this in 1 John chapter 2:18 and 19, which I think I've quoted in every sermon in this series. "Children, it is the last hour." There you get the last times again. And just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now, many antichrist have appeared. From this, we know that it's the last hour.

They went out from us, but they were not really of us for if they had been of us, they would've remained with us, but they went out so that it would be shown that they are really not of us. And if that's not enough, even Peter gets into the conversation. And in 2 Peter chapter 3, really in verses 1 through 4, but I'll do verses 3 and 4. He says this, "Know this first of all that in the last days," there's the last times, "mockers will come with their mocking following their own lusts in saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'"

It's always been that way. Every first century apostle said to everyone, they were training that be on the alert and don't be surprised that false teachers will arise. And when they arise, listen to the words of the apostles. It means trust God's word. If you want to know whether somebody is telling the truth, see, does it say that in the scripture? It's the word of God that shapes and teaches us the right teaching and the right doctrine of Jesus.

And when people don't have a relationship with God in these last times, here's what they're going to be. Jude points them out. It says, "Mockers following after their

own lust who cause division, worldly-minded, and devoid of the spirit." And because we've spent so much time on this, I won't elaborate long, but let's just walk through them. They're mockers. Mockers are those who do not believe in the second coming of Christ. Mockers are those who will say, "Hey, where's this second coming? All your Christians always talk about Jesus coming back. He's never coming back. People have been saying, it's the end times for 2000 years. Where's he at?"

They mock the fact that the word of God teaches that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on the earth and under the earth that Jesus Christ, Lord to the glory of God, the father. They mock that because they don't know God and they're not preparing people for that. I'm going to tell you the greatest event in all world history is when Jesus Christ is coming back, where you will give an account to the king of kings and lord of lords for every thought, word, and deed that you ever had.

And if you know him, it'll be the most glorious moment in your life. And if you don't, you'll be separated in hell from him for all eternity. Mockers say no such thing, no such thing. I'm not preparing you for that because I don't even believe that. What else are they? They're not only mockers, they follow their ungodly lust. And why wouldn't they?

If they don't know the Lord, they can't follow after him. Even in 1 Corinthians where they said that the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, here's what Paul says. "But a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit for their foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually unappraised." In other words, those who do not know Jesus, they can't

understand the word unless the spirit of God makes them alive so that they can understand it.

A non-believer can read the word in hopes that the spirit of God will get ahold of them to reveal that Jesus is the Christ, but a non-believer that doesn't believe that Jesus is the Christ can read the Bible every day for the rest of his or her life and not understand anything about God.

They're natural men. And when they're natural men, they're not filled with the spirit. They don't care about the things of God. They don't care about the glory of God. They don't care about the coming of God. They care about things of into here and now. So when you hear false teachers, what they like to talk about is your life. You'll hear a variety of teaching, but it all boils down to you becoming a better version of yourself.

Here's my problem with that teaching, the Bible says that your best works are like filthy rags. The Bible says there's no one good. No, not one. It's as if God looks on the world and says, "You stand in judgment and you are all pieces of dug." And false teachers say, "Be the best piece of dung you can possibly be." It's foolishness. There's way more than that. There's the glory of God in and through us who redeems that, which is sinful, who lives through us, who's worthy of all of our praise in the natural man and a natural woman don't teach that way. They teach about just the here and now, which is why they do number three, they cause division.

In his high priestly prayer, before he went to the cross, Jesus prayed for all of his disciples and future disciples that they would be won. He prayed to his dad. He said, "I

in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity, so the world would know that you sent me. What's Jesus' prayer for his body that we would be one. Not just BRAVE Church, but the church of Jesus Christ around the world that we be united.

What do false teachers do? They cause division. Every church, split is satanical inspired. Let me say that again. You didn't hear what I said. Every church split is satanical inspired.

Amen.

Because it usually boils down to somebody's preferences over a non-essential issue that doesn't have relevance to the glory of God. They cause division. Causing division over a non-essential issue is always satanical inspired. Right? That's what they do. They cause division. And what else do they do? They're worldly-minded. We've talked about that. They speak of this world rather than the glory of God. That's all you'll hear them talk about. Money and marriage, and kids, and parenting, and raising, and doing. T.

That's part of what God teaches us to do as believers, but that's a secondary issue to us knowing Jesus and bringing him glory so that God in his mercy can live his life out through us in all those areas of our life. And why do they all do this? He tells us because they're devoid of the spirit.

Now, what does that mean? When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, the leader of the Pharisees in that generation, the religious leader, he told him, "You must be born again." In John 3:3, he told him, "You got to be born again." In John 3:7, you must be

he born again. Why would he tell him that? Because we're all spiritually dead and until we've been made alive through the gospel of Jesus Christ, we are devoid of the spirit. We don't have the spirit. But what the Bible says in Romans 8:9, it says, "If you do not have the spirit of Christ, you are not of Christ."

Which means when you trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior, you confess them as your Lord, the Holy Spirit, third person of the Trinity comes to live in your life. When he lives in your life and takes your life over, you will live differently than you did before. Because the spirit of God is not only around you, the spirit of God is in you and directing you. Why do false teachers not talk about that? Because they're devoid of the spirit. They don't have the spirit of God in them guiding them, leading them. And so what are they doing? They're just leading themselves, and they're just talking about this world.

We've talked about this over and over and over. So he's saying in these last days, remember to trust God's word. It means reflect on God's word. Remember what God's word says, meditate on God's word. Do this thing. Trust God's word. Then he says this, because you would think that what Jude is about ready to tell us now is like, "Now, that I've told you all this stuff, now I'm going to teach you how to fight." We would think that what he's going to tell us to do is how to call out everybody and tell everybody else why they're wrong. And that's not what he does.

He says, "In these last days, remember to do this, make your focus, your growth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Make your focus, your own personal growth in the Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, what he doesn't say is make your focus. Everybody else is

doing everything wrong and call him all out. No, make your focus, your personal growth in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice what he says. Starting in verse 20, he says this, "But you, beloved..." Let me remind you again. In 25 verses when he says three different times that you're beloved, he's trying to make a point. When things are repeated in the Bible, there's a point trying to be made. Now, why would he tell us three times? He already told us in verse 3. Because we, as Christians tend to forget that we're truly loved by God. We as Christians tend to live outside of the love of God. But you, beloved, I mean, you got to know who you are before you can fight the way God wants you to fight. You are the beloved of God. You're loved by God.

Then what's he say to do, "But you, beloved," verse 20, "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." Now building yourself up, this word building means to engage in the building process both personally and corporately.

Oftentimes, Christians who believe that they've been saved by grace and rightly so, then falsely think that spiritual growth is God's job only. In other words, God saved me. And if he wants to grow me and change me, that's his job. I'm sure he'll do it. I'm not partnering with him. I'm not helping him. Jude says just the opposite. Jude is not going to argue that you haven't been saved by grace through faith. As a matter of fact, that's what he believes. But if you've been saved by grace through faith, then there's a

partnership with you and the Lord of being built up in the most holy faith, which means you're going to offer God everything you have, so that collectively with God and with the body of Christ, you can grow to the full measure of who you are.

Now, I know my audience. So I'm going to talk to you a little bit. Most of you were born and raised in America, right? Most of you, if you weren't have lived here for a long time. Because of that, I need to be telling you this. Most of you think that every command in the Bible is geared just for you and you alone because you're an individualist and that's what you were taught in America.

But I want to tell you something, when the Bible gives commands, who's he giving the command to. All of us, collectively. Why? Because we are his body. Now, why do I tell you that? Because for many of us, when we think about spiritual growth, here's what we think about. "I need to read my Bible more. I need to pray more. I need to evangelize more. I need to learn how to tithe. I need, I need, I need, I need."

Some of that is true, but here's what we need to learn together. We need to learn how to encourage each other to do that. I've been walking with Christ for almost 31 years. If you saw a graph of my Christian life, it would not be this steady incline of growth. There would be fall-offs. There would be ups and downs. Just like the stock market. Just like it would be in your life. But if you studied those areas in my life in times where I've been growing exponentially in the Lord, I can promise you, it's always been when I've been connected to other people who are investing in my life and I'm investing in theirs.



Every time you would see a plateau or a short falling off, here's what you would see. Jeff trying to walk out his spirituality on his own. You cannot be the full measure of Christ in you by yourself.

Amen.

It is an impossibility. But you hear lies all the time. You have to have community and the devil knows that you have to have community, so he lies to you. And it's a hybrid of these two different lies. For some of you, he lies to you like this. Do not get involved in community at that church. Do not get in a small group. Your life is a mess. I mean, you are so needy right now if you got in that small group. You would dominate the time. Everybody would be looking at you. It would be embarrassing. It would be wrong. Plus, those people are going to judge you anyway.

They're going to look down on you and say, "Yeah, you are a fool." Why are you acting like that if you're a Christian?" Just don't get in community until you fix yourself. Then there's the other lie over here. Why would you ever want to get in a group with those needy people over there? They're going to drain all your time? What a waste of time that is. Both are lies. Here's why, because the reality is every single one of us is broken and needy.

And the reality is every single one of us needs somebody to speak into our life and have several people that are mutually encouraging us to do that, and there's never a time where that's not true. And the reality is, there's a ton of people at BRAVE Church who will love you where you're at no matter where you're at, but love you

enough to not see you stay where you're at.

The other reality is this, for those of us who get lied to and say, "Yeah, all those needy people over there. I don't need that." Which works really well until you get a phone call and realize that your health isn't so good anymore and you only got so much time to live. Which is really good until, you know what, your spouse is not being right with you and everything got overturned. Everything is fine until one of your kids goes wayward. Everything is fine until you, "Man, I lost my job and I didn't think that was going to happen." Because the reality is, we can't handle our own life by ourself ever.

Here's what Jesus says, "When things are going well or whether things aren't going so well, y'all need each other." Community is not mandated like you better do this. You better get in a small group or you're wrong. It's just expected. How can you grow to the full measure of who you are without other people in your life? So here's two rhetorical questions for you. Ready? Rhetorical question number one. Who are the three, four, or five people that meet with you on a regular basis that are encouraging you to grow in your relationship with Christ? Who are they? Can you see them by face? Can you see them by name? Do you know who they are? Can you spit out those names right now?

These people are totally committed to you. Who are they? Because if you don't have that, your growth is being hindered. Rhetorical question number two. Who are three, four, or five people that God's put on your heart that you need to be pouring into on a regular basis to help them grow in Christ? If you don't have that, you're not growing either. See small groups are not for spiritual people to help non-spiritual

people. And they're not for non-spiritual people to pour into lives of other, it's mutual ministry for all of us to speak life of Christ and encourage each other to grow.

First time, I ever experienced that was when I was in college. I'd been in different Bible studies. I'd been in different small groups. They're horrible. They had all the same experiences you had, went to one that a professor of mine said he would facilitate. Didn't know what facilitate meant. Turned out he was leading the whole thing and would just ask questions and let us all talk about our stuff and would encourage us to do that.

But I remember the very first one we went to, here's what he said. He says, "If this is going to work, everybody here has got to be committed to everybody else in the group." Which means if Jeff is going through something, y'all need to be there for Jeff. And if Johnny is going through something, you're all there for Johnny. And if Matt is going through something, we're all there for Matt. Are we agreeing to that? Because if we don't have that, the group won't even matter, because you can't create community meeting three times a month for two hours and call it community. It's not community.

Community is I'm giving my life to other people and they are giving their life to me. That changes everything. So I remember in that group, that's how we did it. We went to each other's weddings. We supported one another. When people went through hard times, they were there and all this kind of stuff. I remember, the first time I ever preached at a church, some years later. I get up to preach. 12 guys are sitting in a row to come hear me preach my first sermon that was awful. Just to demonstrate we're

here for you. We drove three hours to be there to support you. Because we're committed.

When you have that, you grow. What your heart yearns for is that. Sometimes it can happen in neighborhoods. Sometimes it can happen through groups. Other times it happens organically. But when we get into a place where we're committed to others and they're committed to us, our spiritual growth goes on a new trajectory and a new plane.

So build yourself up in the most holy faith. Then what else does he say? Praying in the Holy Spirit. What's that mean to pray in the Holy Spirit? It means that the word of God is the word of God. We can pray the word of God back to him times. So when you read in the Bible that no weapon formed against you will prosper, you can pray that back to God.

Lord, I praise you that no weapon that the enemy ever tries to bring against me will ever have any prospering result. I mean, and Lord, I just praise you that even when the enemy thought he did a great job nailing you to the cross and killing you, it only propagated the spread of the gospel, so that I would know who you are, that nothing that the enemy intended for evil will ever prosper in my life, but you will use it for good because you love me.

It's praying the word of God. It's scripture fed prayers, but it's also spirit led prayers. Often when you're praying and the more you learn to pray and the more you learn to seek the face of God, God will direct your prayer life towards certain people

or individuals, or groups, or countries, or something that you find yourself praying for that day that when you started out praying, you're like, "I don't even know who these people are and I don't even know why I'm praying for them." Because it's spirit led.

And the more attune when you are to the Holy Spirit, there will be specific times where God puts people or groups on your heart and you're like, "Why am I feeling like I got to know about them?" Because he's calling you to pray for him. Because God is doing something supernaturally that you won't even know about until you get to heaven. Pray in the spirit. That's the way you build your faith. When you begin to intercede for others, when you begin to listen to the spirit of God and how he in your heart and how you pray those things out to him.

And then he says this, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." This is the third time we've talked about it today. Does it bear repeating? Yes, it does because we need to understand that we stay in God's love. If you get out of God's love, Christianity becomes a work. It becomes a religion rather than a relationship. Stay in relationship with God. Always make it about that relationship. And then he says this, "Waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

It means you should be yearning for Jesus Christ to return. Now listen, I get it if you're young. I totally get it if you're young. I mean, you have an idea. "I want to get married first and I love to have kids. I've been going to school for a long time, I like to get my first job and I'd like to get a house someday. I'd like to do all that." That's great. There's nothing wrong with that. Unless that's not primary in your life.

If Jesus comes back and you're like, "Doggone it, I was going to get married in like a year and I'm bummed now." You got the wrong priority list. Or I wanted to buy a house first. I mean you could have at least waited a couple years and I could have bought a house. Then you could have come. That's wrong. You should be eagerly awaiting the Lord. Why? Because five seconds in the presence of Jesus will change everything in your life and you would never want to look back ever again.

So we should be waiting anxiously for him to come, which is really good news because no matter what goes on in life, you're going to have struggles. No matter what goes on in life, you're going to have tribulation and challenges. The good news is Jesus is coming back and I can tell you when. Soon. He's coming soon. Are you ready for him? So that when he shows up and every eye looks upon him, we will say, "Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ." And I'll tell you this, the longer you live, the more you want to see him show up sooner than later.

That's what he was saying. So make your focus, your own personal growth in the Lord. Now, as we talk about that, I think there's things we got to hold onto because what is it we hold onto when it comes to true teaching of the word and what are those secondary issues? So I made a list of two different slides today to help you out with that. Because I want you to know as a church, this is central. These are doctrinal must. These are things you have to believe. These are things you must teach. This is who we are. We can't waver on any of these things. And then secondary issues.

These are things you can have convictions on, but not to criticize other people

that think differently than you. So let me talk about the doctrinal must. Let me talk about teaching you must believe. I'll give you seven. You can write these down. The first one is the Trinity. First one is the Trinity. The Godhead is made up of father, son and Holy Spirit. The father is not the son and the spirit. The son is not the father and the spirit and the spirit is not the father and the son, but they all three make up one essence of the Godhead.

You might say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, how do you explain that?" Ready? Glory to God. That's who he is. He's inexplorable. Jesus didn't become Jesus when he came to earth, he had eternally existed. The Holy Spirit didn't become God when he came to earth, he had eternally existed. Father, son, Holy Spirit, three distinct persons, all eternal forming one essence of our Godhead, the Trinity. Must believe it.

It doesn't mean that when you come to Christ, you totally understand everything, but it's a denial of the Trinity is to deny the Godhead. What about number two? How about this? The full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ. That's a doctrinal must. See, when Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he had always been God. Now, guess what he was? He's fully human. So when we read through who Jesus is in the gospels throughout the New Testament, who is he? Is he God or is he man? Yes.

When Jesus said, "I thirst," was it the man's side or the God side? Yes. When Jesus had compassion for people, was it the man's side or the God side? Yes. When Jesus rose from the dead, was it the God or the man? Yes. He's 100% both. If he's not God, his death on the cross meant nothing. If he's not human, you have no

connection with God. He had to be both. How's he coming back as God or man? Yes.

False teachers always try to divide Jesus. I mean, these first two should tell you right now why Jehovah Witness and why Mormonism is cults? Because they don't believe those first two.

Right.

They really don't believe much of the seven, but they for sure don't believe those. Next time somebody comes to your door and knocks on them, just ask them, "Do you believe in the Trinity?" They'll tell you no, then you can tell them to get off your porch because you don't want false doctrine. You can ask them has Jesus Christ always existed? They'll tell you no. You say, "Well, then what does his death in the cross mean?" I mean, just ask simple questions.

Number three is this, the spiritual lostness of the human race? The Bible says all of sin had fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible says that we are dead in our transgressions and sins. The Bible says that we are under the wrath of God and the Bible says that there's no one that seeks God. No, not one. It's not like you're kind of lost, it's like you're lost, lost. Everybody's lost, lost. Nobody is born good. Nobody is born looking for God.

Nobody is like, "Well, I'm kind of been spiritual." No, you're kind of dead. And there's nothing you're doing to get right with God. You're completely lost in every way, and every way you view the world is skewed because of your sin. That's a doctrine we got to hold on to because if that's not true, then why do we need Jesus? Well, I kind of



needed him, but I was pretty good too. No, you're dead. And God's wrath remains on you, which is why number four is important. Right?

Number four is the substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The substitutionary atonement claims this, that Jesus Christ died in your place for all your sin and the death you deserve to die, Jesus died for you. It wasn't just an act of love, it was an incredible act of justice that all the wrath that God, the father was going to pour out on you because of your sin, his son went to the cross and God the father poured out all of his wrath for you on his son. He substituted his son for the wrath he was going to pour out on you. That's the gospel.

It wasn't, "Well, Jesus is loving and he died and other people are loving and they died." No. He was your substitute taking all your penalty for sin. And guess what? He rose from the dead. Let me say it again. You didn't hear that second part. He rose from the dead. He's as alive as he's ever been. He conquered death and in him and in him alone, we have life in his name. If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, everything we talk about is foolishness. We're to be pitied more than anybody. We believe in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, who is ruling and reigning over the entire planet earth.

Number five is this, how do we get saved? Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone and Christ alone. It's all God's work. He's the one who makes you alive. He's the one that opens your eyes. He's the one that gives you faith to believe. And by your faith in him, in Jesus Christ alone, can you have salvation? Which means if you're here today and you say, "Well, I'm religious or I've gone to church. I've been a good person. I would tell you on the authority of God's word, that's not enough. You need to be

made alive by Christ through your faith in him and in him alone, rejecting all other ways to have an accept through Jesus." It's an exclusive way. He's the narrow gate. He's the way of life. And yet it's inclusive that anyone who comes, he will never turn way.

Number six is this, the physical return of Christ. Jesus Christ is coming back as the God/man and all of his glory and every knee will bow in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and declare that he's the Lord. It's true. He's coming back. You'll see him come. And then finally is number seven, the authority and inerrancy of scripture. There's nothing wrong with God's word. Even the things you don't understand, it means that you're flawed. God is not.

Start a series in two weeks. Come hear it. The word of God is true. These are seven things when we see other people being dragged off by them, point out what they're being dragged off by. Don't shout at them. Don't scream at them, but show them that no, Jesus is eternal. Godhead is Trinity. Only through Jesus can you have life in his name. You know what, Jesus is coming back. You know what, Jesus did take your penalty for sin. And if he didn't, then why did he have to die in the first place? You know what, the word of God is true. There's nothing wrong with it. Show me what's wrong with the Bible. There's nothing wrong. You'll never find anything wrong with it.

All it does is dictate that it's true. These are things that we want to center on. As a church, these are things I will die on a hill for. These are things I believe with my whole heart they're unchangeable, they're truth. We need to hold on to them as a church. Let me tell you about some other things. As you grow in the Lord, you're going

to have convictions about other things that not everybody is not going to have conviction about with you, right?

You can have those growing convictions and you should without criticizing people that don't think the same way you do. What I find is when people start talking about false teachers and apostates, they usually don't go after the list I just gave you, they'll go after the list I'm about ready to give you, which are secondary issues, which really don't define whether a person's a Christian or not, it just sees that they understand scripture differently, or they don't have a full understanding or awareness of scripture.

So you can have conviction on this. I have conviction on all these. That shouldn't surprise you. But as you have conviction on these, you shouldn't live in a way that criticizes other people that think differently than you. So let me give you this list. Start with number one. The role of women in ministry. How about that? The Bible makes pretty clear that God created both genders in Genesis chapter 1 and that both were very, very good and that God made them both equal and both bear his image. And yet, as you read throughout the scripture, even in Genesis, all the way through, that God made men and women different. Did you know that?

Amen.

Any married people here. Y'all are different and it's beautiful. That's how God made it. Both are of equal value to God. How God made women and how God made men are both good. We should have conviction on how God wants to use women in the church because God has gifted women the same way God gives men, and then he

gives us instruction to how he wants to use women and he gives us instruction to how he want to use men. I have a conviction about how that is. There's some churches that will have the senior pastor's wife preach on mother's day.

We won't do that at BRAVE Church, because I have a conviction that, that doesn't align with what the word of God teaches. Because I believe women are called to teach women. And it's not an issue of ability, it's an issue of the word of God. But let tell you something. There's a lot of people that believe those first seven that I gave you that are totally born again, that believe that, that would have their wife preach for them or another woman on a Sunday. I'm not going to spend my time criticizing them or telling them that they're wrong, even though they are.

So we're going to love them in the body of Christ because that's not something that we need to attack. Grow in your conviction, but love people that think differently than you in that area. Number two, how about this? The understanding and expression of charismatic gifting. The understanding and expression of charismatic gifting. Does God still gift the body? Well, of course he does. But how does he? Are certain gifts ceased or do they all continue? And if they do continue then how are we to use them in the church and what's it to look like? And should we have prophetic words every single week? Or should we not do that? Or what's it look like? How are we supposed to function? Should people speak in tongues or not? What does that look like?

Then we attack people that have different convictions than us. At BRAVE Church, we're a continuations church. We believe that God has all the gifts for today and that God can use those any way that he wants. But I have a great love for my brothers and

sisters in Christ that say, "No, certain gifts have ceased, Pastor Jeff. They don't exist anymore." And you can't say that. I love you and you're wrong, but I love you. Right? But I'm not a heretic because I believe all the gifts exist today. And you're not a heretic if you believe that they don't.

It's a different understanding of how scripture is function. It's a secondary issue. It's important. We need to grow in it. We need to have conviction about it, but it's not the most essential. How about this one? The timing and understanding of Christ return. We said it's foundational for to believe that Jesus Christ is coming back. That's true. I mean, he's coming back. There's no doubt about it. But when?

I mean, how's he coming back? When's he going to come back? Is it pre-trip, mid-trip post-trip, pre-wrath? All this kind of stuff. I mean, I know the answer God told me about it. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter if you don't agree with me. We get all these fights because somebody, "Oh, it's before the trip, it's after the trip." We get all these... Have conviction.

There's godly men and godly women who study God's word, who have written on this stuff that see it differently. Perhaps God wants us to major on the majors that Jesus Christ is coming and that we need to get more people to welcome him rather than debate the timing of it.

Amen.

But it's important that you grow in your understanding of it. It's important that you have a conviction about what you think is going to happen based upon the word of

God. But don't divide over it. How about number four? Church polity and expectations. Should churches be elder led or should there be a bishop? How should deacons function? What's your view on baptism? How do you see communion? How should the church be? How should decisions get made? Should the congregation get to vote on everything or do the elders make all the decisions?

Really depends upon how you interpret the word of God. I have a lot of friends who baptize infants, not as salvation. They don't believe that the baby is being baptized any more than we believe that adults are getting saved when we baptize them, but they baptize infants as a sign of God's covenant. The same way circumcision was in the Old Testament. And they baptize them believing that families are going to see that kid grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And they're baptizing as a sign of a covenant.

Okay. I'm not going to argue with you. But if you come to BRAVE Church, when you get older and get disabled [inaudible 00:41:02] there too. I mean, it's cool. But it's not something I'm going to divide over. I have growing convictions that disciples should be baptized. Those who trusted Jesus Christ should be baptized. That's why we do parent commissioning and baby dedications because we're handing them off. Look, Because it's our understanding of the word, but it's not something I'm going to fight people over that think differently than me.

How about number five? This is a beautiful one. Worship styles. How should we worship the Lord? Should there be a choir? Should there even be a band? Pastor Jeff, I've been dying for the day that the organ comes on the stage. It's going to be

awesome. It'll be long after I'm gone. I grew up with it. How should the liturgy function? What should we look like? How loud should the worship music be? Right?

The bible doesn't tell us that stuff. I mean, I personally think that if I can go to a Bronco's game where in the fourth quarter they can put decibel levels on and it's 105.7 on the decibel level. Love you, Broncos players. Jesus Christ is worth more of our honor and praise than you are. So I don't mind being a little bit loud. But that doesn't mean the Bible says, "Oh, be really loud and play the speakers." It doesn't say that. We got Liberty in these areas. Don't fight over people that do it differently.

Or how about Christian experience? Number six. How does prayer function today? Does God really answer prayer? How does God speak today? Can you say speaking a dreamer, a vision? How do healings work? What are our expectations of what we expect God to do on this side of heaven? We end up arguing over all those things. And then finally it says specific Christian behaviors.

How should a pastor dress? There's a guy in our church. He said, "I sent my video to your brother. I sent him some him videos. He won't watch you because you don't wear a suit. If other people tell me at BRAVE Church, if you ever wore a suit, I would leave." I mean, how do you do that? What do we do on Halloween? Do we form our own little club so that we're not part of the evil world or do we celebrate with candy and his love people that our neighbors. What do we do? Can we drink alcohol if it's in moderation and we're not getting drunk or is it always wrong every single time?

I mean, we have all these things that we want everybody to agree on and here's

what happens. If you make those secondary issues, primary issues, you can shrink the church so you can get most of the people to agree with everything that you think. Well, here's what you're not doing. You're not glorified in God and you're not reaching a soul for Jesus Christ. But the three of you will think that you're doing really good work, right?

I mean, even if the church was just my family with my wife and kids, we agree most of the time, but we wouldn't even agree on everything. Here's my point. I don't want to be a church, BRAVE Church that majors on the minors. I do want you to grow in your conviction. I do want you to have conviction. You should feel free to develop your convictions, but not criticize people that have different ones than you.

As a church, we have to have some convictions. If we said, "Well, women do whatever you want. We believe in all the gifts and we kind of don't. So just if you feel like speaking in tongues, speak in tongues, and if you don't, don't." It creates confusion. So we got to have conviction on these things. But don't criticize others that do it differently than you. Because there are some churches that are only known for being doctrinal cops and having conferences to show why everybody else on these secondary issues is wrong. And it's a waste of time.

They go after women that are gifted of the Lord that I know are saved and I know are gifted, and they say mean things about them. They go after people that believe in spiritual gifts for today and they go after them as if they're wrong. Even though we all agree and we're going to spend eternity together. That's not what I want to be known as a church, and that's not what Jude wants us to be known as a church.



He wants us to grow in our own faith and he wants us to hold to the central tenets of the faith where we can have convictions and secondary issues without being criticizing to those who don't hold our same ones.

Then he says this, which I think is most important. "When it comes to this gospel in the last days," he says, "to remember to live with evangelistic fervor, intensity, and compassion." He says, "When it comes to the gospel, when it comes to striking back, if you really want to tick the enemy off, if you really want to make him mad, lead lots of people to Jesus. Proclaim the gospel to the lost." Here's what he says. Notice what he says. He says, "Have mercy on some who are doubting."

BRAVE Church. Let me tell you something. There are many of you here who know Jesus Christ, and yet there are times you still have doubts. How did Jesus handle that? I mean, he spent three plus years with his disciples and after he was resurrected, he went to visit them in a room and all the apostles, Judas Iscariot hung himself. All the apostles that were alive were still there except for Thomas.

I don't know where Thomas was, but whatever Thomas was doing was apparently not as important as seeing the resurrected Jesus. So all the apostles say, "We've seen the Lord. We know who he is. He's alive. We saw him." What does Thomas say? "Hey, unless I see his hands and touch his side, I will not believe it." He tells his best friends that he trusts, "There's no way."

So about a week later, Jesus shows up again. Everybody is there including Thomas. Let me tell you what you don't see in the Bible that Jesus comes in

supernaturally and says, "Get lost," and pins Thomas to the wall where he is choking to death. He'd say, "Hey, stupid. I told you I was going to rise to the dead. Why'd you have doubts." It's not what he says. He says, "Come here. Here's my hands. Go ahead and touch them. I've been hearing that you had some doubt, so go ahead and touch my side. Stop doubting because I want you to believe."

What does Thomas say at that point? "My Lord and my God." Then Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not sin and yet believe. Have mercy on those who doubt." When you come to church and you have doubts, feel free to ask any question that you want. If people won't allow you to ask the questions you doubt about that says more about them than it does about your good question.

The way you're going to grow in the Lord is to ask questions like, "I don't understand this and how can this be true." I've never heard anything about this Trinity? How do I believe this? People that push you away, it's because they don't have answers yet. Ask any question you want. When we see people who are doubting in their faith, we should have incredible mercy on them. The same way Jesus had mercy on them and say, "Hey, I love you enough. Here's what the word of God says. It's okay to have doubts. Here's what you'll find. If you really believe God's word and you go after answers, God will reveal himself that he's true." It's okay. Have mercy on someone.

Then he says to this, "Not only we have mercy on those that doubt," but what does he say? "Save others, snatch them out of the fire." Now, clearly, he's not talking about us and our ability to supernaturally save somebody, he's like save them or

rescue them from the fact that they're walking off the cliff. It would be as if you're going on a camping trip and your one-and-a-half year old is getting near the fire and about ready to jump in. What would you do?

You would grab them by the back of their collar and you would save them. When you see people who are under false teaching, I'm talking about those first seven doctrines. You should do whatever you can to go grab them and tell them the truth of God. I mean, you should picture it as this that all God's wrath is on them and they are in a burning house that is about ready to collapse and you should have that level of intensity to share the gospel with them.

Go after them because God has a love for them. And why do you do that? Because here's what. When you die and you're in heaven, one thing you'll never have the privilege of doing is telling another person about who Jesus Christ is because everybody there knows him. Everybody there will have repented and trusted in him. We have time here and now to go snatch those out of the fire. Those who believe things other than the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Those who are religious, but don't know them. Those who are listening to false teaching who don't know them.

Go get them and go grab them and have evangelistic fervency for that. And then finally he says this for this last group. He says, "And have mercy with fear hating even the garment polluted by flesh." It means show mercy to everyone, but when you see people that have wandered off, don't get polluted in the same sin that they have but hate their sin yet love who they are.

I've seen Christians try to win alcoholics to Christ by going to the bar and getting drunk with them to say, "I'm a cool Christian. You're just a drunk." So be a cool Christian like me and get drunk with me. It doesn't work. It doesn't work if you're like, "I know you struggle with porn. I'll go to the strip club with you and we'll watch together." It doesn't work.

You need to hate the sin that they're a part of so that you don't get connected to it because bad morals, corrupts good character. It means have mercy on them, but do it with the fear of God and the fear of that you would ever participate in anything that they're participating in. You live differently than they live, but you love them and you show mercy to them. You show how God can redeem them from all that, but you don't have to participate in what they participate in.

Now, I told you earlier that the way you can grow is being in community, doing stuff together. And that's true. That's where all the one and others come out of. But if you want to take your faith to a whole different level, this is what Jude is telling us to do. He doesn't say, "Hey, BRAVE Church, hold a conference and show the world why everybody else is wrong but you, and why you've cornered the market on everything." That's not what he says. He says, "If you really want to do this, hold fast to the central tenets of the faith and then share the gospel like crazy to those who need Jesus."

Because one of three things will happen every time you share your and all will grow your faith. First is this. If you share your faith at times, people will come to faith in Jesus Christ and they'll thank you for it. And you'll think to yourself that was probably

the worst presentation of the gospel in the history of the church. And God still used me to lead somebody to Christ.

There's not been a time where I've ever let anybody to Christ where my faith hasn't flourished and grown where I've seen somebody being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved son. Every time I see it, I'm like, "That was awesome." I mean, I can watch old Billy Graham crusades and see people that are wearing big ties from 1970 strolling down the aisle and I get tears in my eyes like, "That's awesome." And that happened 40 years ago.

Second thing that happened is this. When you share your faith, non-believers will ask you questions you do not know the answers to. Most of us are scared to share our faith because what if they ask me something and I don't know how to answer it. Well, ask other people so you can grow. If you want to grow in your faith, like I'll share my faith with my friend and it's not working because he said this or she said that, or they asked this, I didn't know the answer.

So what do you do? Go get the answer. Go talk to somebody that's walked with God longer. Go look in his word. Go study. Right? And when you see the answer, you'll say, "Man, God's word is true. This is awesome." Now you get to go back and give them a real answer for what the question was. Your faith will grow.

Third way it grows is this. You'll share your faith with somebody that completely rejects everything you're telling them. They might tell you to get lost. They might swear at you. They might tell you to get out of your face, and what will happen to you is I

know what I'm saying is true. It totally aligns with the word because when I love people and I'm genuine about it and I share the faith, and they reject me, it just makes the Bible even more true in my life that I know that what believe is the truth."

You can't go wrong by sharing your faith. And what happens in a church when people are committed to evangelism, which is good news proclamation. When people are committed to glorifying God, when we said, "We're here, not because we've cornered the market. We're here because we love Jesus. We want to bring them honor. We want to build everybody up. But man, there's some lost people out there that we're going to go reach. And people start telling their stories about people in our church that were leading them to Christ. Your faith will explode. Your faith will explode." And that's what we want to be known as, as a church.

We don't want to be known as a church that has secondary and tertiary doctrinal issues that we think were right. We want to be known as a church that holds fast to the faith and the doctrines of Jesus that glorify God by reaching more people for Jesus. I asked you earlier in the message who were the two, three, four, five people that are pouring into you and who are the two, three, or four, five people you're pouring into? Here's my other question for you. Ready? Rhetorically, who are the people that you're looking at to show the gospel of Jesus Christ with this week? That's my question.

If you say, "I don't know anybody who's saved," I have really good news for you. Everywhere you'll go, you'll see people all week that are unsaved. It doesn't mean you go beat them over the head. It means you can start with a question and you can say, "Hey, you know I go to church and this is what I believe. What do you believe about

Jesus?" See what they say.

Or why is it that you have a hard time believing this way? Or what is it that hinders you from giving your full allegiance to Jesus? Just have conversation, like, "God, I don't even know any nonbelievers." Just ask God this week. It's not a hard request. He'll answer it. "Hey, God. I hope I run into a nonbeliever I can share my faith with. Will you open my eyes so I see them? They'll be all over the place. And they just have the courage to step up, and one of those three things will happen. And he'll say, "Man, Jesus really is the Christ."

But that's what we want to be known as for a church. Right? I mean, we've made our biggest mistakes as a church. When churches make their biggest mistakes is because we've centered on issues that are important that we need to have conviction on, but they're not the most central issues. And the central issue is the gospel of Jesus Christ to glorify him, to build one another up and to reach people in our city for Jesus.

We want to be a place where people are coming to know Jesus on an ongoing radical basis where they're experiencing God's love being poured into in all of our brokenness, we're mutually ministering to one another and we're seeing more and more people come to know Jesus. Amen? That what's important. All the other stuff, not that big of a deal.

Do you know there's not a lecture series in heaven on the timing of the rapture? Jesus, isn't going to bring us into a room and say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, you said this and this guy said this. Let's talk about it for the next billion years." We're not going to do

that. There's not a women's in ministry conference of how we should have done that. There's not a charismatic expression. Here's what's going to go in heaven. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Heaven and earth that's filled with his glory. We're going to worship him and all else is going to fade away and nothing else is going to matter.

So I just want to invite you to stand. I want to invite you to respond in any way that the Lord's shown you today that would help you grow in your faith by praying together. Would you pray with me? Lord Jesus, we come before you now. And Lord, we're in different parts. We're in different stages. There's different things that you shared with us this morning. Lord, we want to be a congregation that responds to you. And so if you're here this morning and you would say, "Hey, listen, Pastor Jeff, as you were going over to the gospel, I don't believe any of that stuff. But as I'm listening to you, I believe that I'm a sinner. I believe that Jesus is the Lord who died for my sins and rose from the dead, and I want a relationship with him."

Here's what you can pray. Lord Jesus, right now I just want to confess you as my personal Lord and savior. I want to turn all my sin over to you and I want to receive all your life. Lord, on the promise of your word, we pray that as your spirit is indwelt in each person that prayed that prayer that you would fill them up full every single day.

Lord, for some of us here, we've been challenged because there's nobody in our life that's pouring into us and we need that, and we desperately need community even though we've heard the lies of the enemy saying, "You don't have time for that." Lord, for some of us here today, there's people that you've been calling us to pour into, but we believe the lie that we don't have time for that. And Lord, for some of us, we want



to grow, but we're too scared to share our faith because we believe the lie that people are just going to hate us and there's no benefit in it anyway.

Lord, however you've challenged us, Lord, let us grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus today. Let us strike back by loving you, loving one another and loving this world. All for your glory. We give you all the praise in Jesus' name.